



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Watson's Art Journal,

A WEEKLY RECORD OF MUSIC, ART AND LITERATURE.

HENRY C. WATSON, EDITOR.

VOL. SERIES—No 227.
NEW VIII.—No. 19.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1868.

{ FOUR DOLLARS PER YEAR
SINGLE COPIES, 10 CTS.

WILLIAM KNABE & CO.'S

CELEBRATED GOLD MEDAL

GRAND, SQUARE AND UPRIGHT
PIANOS.

These instruments have been for thirty years before the public, in competition with other instruments of first-class makers. They have, throughout that long period, maintained their reputation among the profession and the public as being unsurpassed in every quality found in a first-class Piano.

650 BROADWAY,

AND

CROSBY'S OPERA HOUSE,
Chicago, Ill.

J. BAUER & CO., Agents.

DECKER BROTHERS'

PATENT

PLATE PIANO-FORTES.

NO. 91 BLEECKER ST.,

New York.

These Piano-Fortes are the only instrument made in this country or in Europe, with the full Iron Frame, in which

All the Strings Rest upon Wooden Bearings,

and in which none of the Tuning Pins go through the Iron Plate.

The advantages gained by this arrangement are the production of a

MORE REFINED TONE,

with COMBINED SWEETNESS AND GREAT POWER,

and MORE PERFECT QUALITY THROUGH THE ENTIRE SCALE, and the capacity of

STANDING LONGER IN TUNE,

and retaining its SUPERIOR QUALITY OF TONE, than any other instrument.

Purchasers will find the following words cast on the left hand side of our Patent Plate:

DECKER BROTHERS' PATENT, JUNE, 1863,

THE
WEBER
PIANO-FORTE

IS PRONOUNCED BY THE

First Musicians of this City

AND ELSEWHERE,

AND BY THE

LEADING NEWSPAPERS in the STATES

THE

Best Piano Manufactured

They are used by the CONSERVATORIES OF MUSIC of NEW YORK and BROOKLYN, and all the High Musical Schools of the country, because of their Immense Power, Sweetness, Brilliancy and Perfect Equality of Tone, Elasticity of Touch, and Great Durability

WAREROOMS,

429 BROOME ST.,
NEAR BROADWAY.

(From the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*.)
GERMAN COMIC OPERA.

It is a strange phenomenon that, while German instrumental music can show a mass of compositions which may be denominated humorous, German comic opera has no real existence. In Dittesdorf's productions known as *Singspiele*,* we find undoubtedly an unmistakable foundation, on which German comic opera might have been developed, but that is a process it never underwent. Mozart's *Belmonte und Constanze* is a work bearing in every respect the stamp of divine genius, but the words of the more serious airs are not in accordance with the spirit of our own times; in the *Zauberflöte*, as in the dramas of Shakspeare, the most elevated

* If we allude to Hiller's *Singspiele* only in a note, it is not because we do not properly appreciate the merit of that admirable composer, but because we do not find prominently marked an individual and yet at the same time genuinely national style, such as that which, for instance, in Dittesdorf's *Doctor und Apotheke* even at the present day exerts an absolutely overpowering effect, though, of course, only on those who have still a sense of style. (N. B.—*Singspiele* are light pieces with songs interspersed.—TRANSLATOR.)

sentiments advance hand in hand with the comic element; and, finally, *Figaros Hochzeit*—we make the assertion at the risk of being branded as heretics—is an *Italian* opera, written in the style of the period* by the greatest of German operatic composers.

After Dittesdorf, the class of composition which might be termed German comic opera continued to grow flatter and flatter, sinking into the *Singspiel*, and eventually the farce, where music merely existed on sufferance to accompany the refrain. Shenk's *Dorfbarbier* may, in its day, have been considered entertaining enough, but, for originality, character, masterly coloring, and artistic application of available resources, it cannot for a moment be compared with Dittesdorf's *Doctor und Apotheke*.†

What Kauer composed for *Das Donauweibchen*; and what Wenzel Müller wrote (more particularly the music in Raimund's farces), was simply ballads of a higher order than usual, permeated, it is true, by a touch of almost poetic sentimentality,‡ but not sufficiently robust or vigorously national to take permanent root. The pleasing tunes: "So leb; denn wohl, du stilles Hans," "Brüderlein fein" (at which even Heine used to go into ecstasies, as he could truly do when he chose), and the song of the Dustman, so popular in their day, their popularity being equalled perhaps only by Gellert's poems in the last century, are forgotten! They modestly retired before the coarse farce-music, which, saucy and brazen, appeared in the wake of Nestroy's muse, and that of his successors, and which in its turn is now displaced by the productions of the present period. Perhaps, had Wenzel Müller collected his pleasing and agreeable little melodies in a comic opera, instead of scattering them with a lavish hand about the farces of Raimund and others, he would still be at home in many theatres whence "grand" opera, and low opera have not yet driven away everything else; but his music disappeared with the pieces for which he wrote it.

Perhaps Lortzing might have been the man to elevate German comic opera, if, in the first place, his miserable circumstances had not prevented his ever developing his powers; if he had not been too much of a

† Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segreto* is written in the same style. We must look to the difference in the matter rather than the form.

‡ The air, "Der Weib ist ein Spottcum;" the women's duet in the second act; the finale of the latter; and the concerted piece, "Ich bin von der Polizei," in the last act, must indisputably be called classic.

§ "Half-and-half poetry is dangerous to real poetry," as Grillparzer admirably observes in his poem on Vienna, the "Capua of the intellect."

dilettante as regards his treatment of form; and if his worthy colleagues, the respected *Kapellmeister*, had not, instead of encouraging, looked patronizingly down upon him, though most of them were unable to write ten bars of music like that which sparkles all through his *Waffenschmied*, and *Czaar und Zimmermann*. (The biography of this composer is one of the saddest leaves in the history of German musicians!) Nicolai's *Lustige Weiber* is indisputably the best thing in the way of comic opera that has been composed in Germany during the present century, but it is the production of an eclectic, influenced by noble aspirations, and striving gradually to get rid of the impressions produced by the Italian school. After the *Lustige Weiber*, Flotow's *Stradella* and *Martha* must be considered as very successful comic operas; but the music is not German music; it is an eclectic specimen, put together with great taste, of all kinds of styles. The best numbers in both operas have a decided leaning to French models. What has since been offered by Herr von Flotow and others to the German public scarcely, with a very few exceptions, and those not exceedingly brilliant ones, deserves the name of vocal music, far less that which its composers claim for it! Of the mere imitations of Parisian models we will not say a word.

How is this phenomenon to be explained? The nation which asserts that it is the only nation possessing genuine humor; nay, the only nation understanding it, has for thirty years produced no national comic opera!

If we would examine into the reasons, we are nearly always told: no book that was anything like respectable could be procured, and, therefore, no good comic opera could be composed. Let us grant this reason to be a valid one; how is it that the humorous nation *par excellence* did not possess a truly comic author who could write such a book? To what class do the *Possen* or farces belong, of which a fresh one starts up every week, and for which there is so large a consumption of "music?" Among the authors of these farces, among the representatives of "superior imbecility," as it has been termed, is not there one, who, once in a way, could put a little common sense in sprightly verse? Let us cast a glance on our much reviled neighbors, the French, in whom many rigorists among us deny the existence of aught like "high natural gifts" in the way of music, or anything like "profound" intelligence, and whose comedies and comic operas, they assert, are not suited to the German character. In the first place, the French can boast of comic operas such as *Le Macon*, *La Dame Blanche*, and *Jean de Paris*, which have been acknowledged to be in every respect models by all musicians and lovers of music who do not stand up for tragic opera only (this is a point which we will discuss more at length presently); in addition to these, their composers have produced, moreover, *Le Postillon de Longjumeau*, *La Part du Diable*, and *Le Domino Noir*, which are admirable works, though they may not be entitled to the appellation of classic.* But this is not all; even the last twenty years, so utterly unfertile in Germany, have in France given birth to many very meritorious works of the class we are discussing. We will not dwell upon the small *genre* pictures: *Bon Soir*, *Monsieur*

Pantalon; *Monsieur et Madame Denis*, and *La Chanson de Fortunio* (in our opinion the most successful operetta Offenbach ever wrote), because they are sufficiently known in Germany; we will speak of a three-act opera by Reber, because it affords in its entire plan, that is to say, in the words as well as in the musical treatment, the most brilliant proof that, without frivolity, without immorality, and without certain piquant additions, to which we will not allude more nearly, as our doing so would, at the present moment, be attended by no advantage, it is possible to produce an excellent opera, and because, despite the admirable things it contains, and the great success with which it met thirteen years ago in Paris, the opera in question is utterly unknown in Germany. It is called *Le Pere Gaillard*. In the first place, the subject has been admirably chosen and is taken entirely from every-day life. A wine merchant,† possessed of a small estate in the country, and the author of some merry little songs, lives most happily with his wife, and on good terms with all his neighbors. He is well off, thanks partly to his own labor and partly to the liberal payment he receives for a foster-son, sent in his tenderest infancy mysteriously to him. A Paris Savant, who often flies from the turmoil of the capital, and seeks renewed health and amusement at Pere Gaillard's, takes a particular interest in the boy, and on remarking that the latter, as he grows up, and the young daughter of his host, are fond of each other, on his death-bed appoints Pere Gaillard his executor. The action begins at the moment the relatives of the deceased come to Pere Gaillard's, for the purpose of being present at the reading of the will; they include an old military man and his wife (a lady in whom Gaillard's wife thinks she perceives a striking likeness to her own foster-son); a gentleman somewhat reduced in the world, etc. The two men, finding from Gaillard's account of his connection with the old Savant, that the property in all likelihood is not left to them, resolve, from a spirit of revenge and envy, to excite Gaillard's suspicions as to his wife's fidelity. They prove to him that, as he has himself long believed, his foster-son is the son of the old Savant, and that the visits of the latter, before the birth of the boy, to Gaillard's house, were intended not for Gaillard himself but for his wife. By means of malicious allusions, and perfidious interpretations of little incidents, perfectly harmless in themselves, but capable of a certain significance when spitefully made to bear upon one another, they pour poison in the honest man's heart. Thus, when, on the will being opened, he is found to be the principal heir, and when, moreover, a sealed letter is discovered, addressed to Madame Gaillard, and to be handed to her alone, Gaillard is convinced of the lady's guilt, without seeing that this public act of confidence in him is a proof of the contrary. When, lastly, his neighbors, who have made arrangements to give him an especial testimony of their respect, assemble at his house, and begin whispering together mysteriously, he fancies he perceives the proof that his domestic misfortune is already generally known, and suddenly declares to the relatives that he will not accept the inheritance. He forbids his daughter to think of a union with his foster-son; after previously persuading his

man servant to marry the maid, he induces him to give up the match; and introduces disunion and confusion into the entire household. His jealousy and rage at last burst forth on his meeting his wife at the moment she is holding the mysterious letter in her hand. He wants to see it. She refuses to let him do so, on the ground that it concerns a third person, a lady, without whose permission she dare not even let him know the contents. He insists, and a passionate scene ensues, but, at the right moment, he awakes to the consciousness that a man who has lived for twenty years happily with his wife, ought not to yield to contemptible suspicion excited by those who are envious of him, and thus all at once destroy his domestic happiness; nay, he himself gives the letter to the lady—to the wife of the old officer, a lady whose confidence was enjoyed, in days of misfortune before her marriage, by the old Savant. The letter contains certain information which the reader will easily guess. Pere Gaillard is once more himself; with light and joyous hand he arranges what he has thrown into disorder; and his neighbors and friends, wishing to pay him a particular mark of distinction, appoint him (unless we are mistaken) mayor, but he thankfully declines the honor, begging them still to bestow their friendship on him as an independent man.

We have purposely gone into the book at such length because it belongs to that class of work for which there are plenty of subjects in Germany; because it enters so thoroughly into the feelings and life of the middle classes, and because the point more especially to be proved was that we, who boast with justice of a higher kind of life among our middle classes than is to be found among those of other nations, have not understood how to profit by it, as well as the author of the French libretto has understood to profit by that of his country.

Of the music, we cannot speak at equal length, because our doing so would lead us from the subject of this article; we will, therefore, merely remark that it is conceived in a fresh, simple strain; that it contains many felicitous bits; and that it is worked out in a masterly manner. Let us now return to German comic opera and endeavor to discover why it is so utterly prostrate.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

CURIOSITIES OF SOUND.

[CONCLUDED.]

Although a plucked string, or a string otherwise made to vibrate, produces sound by beating the air, it must be observed that a string is too small a thing of itself to set in motion such a mass of air as is necessary to fill a room with sound. Hence to make strings available for musical instruments they have to be so connected with larger surfaces as to set them in vibratory motion. These surfaces we call sound-boards, and in every stringed instrument the most important feature is this sonorous medium. The quality of this part of a piano, harp, violin, or lute, determines the entire goodness of the instrument. The sound-board must be able to take up and give out to perfection every vibration that every string offers to it, or it will not do its duty properly, and the instrument, of which it is almost body and soul, will be a bad one.

The high value set upon venerable violins

* We must here again expressly state that we leave out of consideration the absolute partisans of the Cothurnus.

† It is now thirteen years since we heard the opera in Paris, and we speak from memory only.